

## Knowledge is Power

*It is the goal of the MRC to ensure that volunteers and members of the community are as prepared as possible in the event of an emergency. To aid in this, we will be dedicating a section of each newsletter to providing further education about a possible public health threat...*

# H1N1 Flu Information

### What is novel H1N1 (swine flu)?

Novel H1N1 (referred to as "swine flu" early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread.

### Why is novel H1N1 virus sometimes called "swine flu"?

This virus was originally referred to as "swine flu" because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in this new virus were very similar to influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs (swine) in North America. But further study has shown that this new virus is very different from what normally circulates in North American pigs. It has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia and bird (avian) genes and human genes. Scientists call this a "quadruple reassortant" virus.

### Are there human infections with novel H1N1 virus in the U.S.?

Yes. Human infections with the new H1N1 virus are ongoing in the United States. Most people who have become ill with this new virus have recovered without requiring medical treatment. CDC routinely works with states to collect, compile and analyze information about influenza, and has done the same for the new H1N1 virus since the beginning of the outbreak.

### Is novel H1N1 virus contagious?

CDC has determined that novel H1N1 virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

### How does the H1N1 virus spread?

Spread of novel H1N1 virus is thought to occur in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

### What are the signs and symptoms of this virus in people?

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Severe illnesses and death have occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

### How severe is illness associated with novel H1N1 flu virus?

Illness with the new H1N1 virus has ranged from mild to severe. While most people who have been sick have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred.

In seasonal flu, certain people are at "high risk" of serious complications. This includes people 65 years and older, children younger than five years old, pregnant women, and people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions. About 70 percent of people who have been hospitalized with this novel

H1N1 virus have had one or more medical conditions previously recognized as placing people at "high risk" of serious seasonal flu-related complications. This includes pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma and kidney disease.

One thing that appears to be different from seasonal influenza is that adults older than 64 years do not yet appear to be at increased risk of novel H1N1-related complications. CDC laboratory studies have shown that children and most adults younger than 60 years old do not have existing antibodies to novel H1N1 flu virus; however, about one-third of adults older than 60 may have antibodies against this virus. It is unknown how much, if any, protection may be afforded against novel H1N1 flu by any existing antibody.

### Once vaccine is available, the Vaccine Targeted Population will be:

- All pregnant women
- All household contacts and caregivers for children under 6 months of age
- Healthcare and EMS personnel
- Children and young adults ages 6 months to 24 years
- Non-elderly adults 25-64 years with underlying health conditions

Above information provided by the CDC and Panhandle Health District.

For more information on the H1N1 flu, please go to [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) or [www.phd1.idaho.gov](http://www.phd1.idaho.gov)